Program Self-Assessment

From the

GUIDE TO QUALITY:

Even Start Family Literacy Program

Volume I, Revised

(unpublished final draft, June 2001)

by RMC Research Corporation

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

VERY DESCRIPTIVE				NOT AT ALL DESCRIPTIVE
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1 The partners **design the program** together and periodically review the effectiveness of strategies in meeting desired outcomes.

2 The **LEA** takes an **active role** in the partnership, and school staff are knowledgeable about and supportive of Even Start's goals and services. The LEA values the role of Even Start in developing early reading skills; Even Start staff are included in district professional development and as part of the early reading team.

3 The partnership develops **relationships** with a **wide variety of agencies.** These relationships range in purpose from simple information exchange and coordination, to joint referrals for services, to providing core services on an ongoing basis. The partnership expands the circle of relationships with other agencies to meet the growing and changing needs of the program and families.

4 **Collaborations** are formed with **key agencies** that provide high-quality services which are directly related to Even Start's core program components. To fully sustain the literacy focus of the program, Even Start collaborates with multiple providers of early childhood and adult education services.

5 The program has written **agreements with collaborators** concerning the nature of the relationship and services to be rendered. The strongest relationships include clear benefits for both collaborators and the Even Start program as a result of working together.

6 **Cooperative relationships** are formed with agencies for referral, coordination and external support services in fields such as health, housing, social services, counseling, substance abuse, job training and placement, and transportation. This includes programs funded by federal and state legislation.

7 The program builds on and does **not duplicate high quality community services** that are meeting family needs. It expands upon, improves and fills gaps in services available from collaborators based on the needs of the families served.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

8   An **administrative team** of representatives from partner and collaborating agencies meets regularly to ensure good communication and coordination of services.

9   The partners and collaborating agencies see collaboration as primarily **beneficial to families**; there are secondary benefits to the agencies themselves. They agree on mutual goals for families, including literacy goals.

10 The partners create a **governance or advisory board** that serves as a bridge and unifying force between the partners and collaborators, and the program and the community. The board is an informed, committed and objective group that provides advice and support for the Even Start program and its long-range plan for sustainability past the grant cycle.

11 **Communication** among collaborating agency staffs is frequent and staff visit each others' program sites.

12 **Referrals** for the program come from collaborators and other agencies. Even Start families are also referred to collaborators for services. Even Start staff stay in touch with other agencies about families they have referred to ensure that they are participating and receiving adequate services.

13 The program and collaborators **share information about families** to improve and tailor services they receive. Confidentiality issues have been addressed; programs know what information can and cannot be shared.

14 The program and collaborators work together to **minimize barriers to participation** in services (for example, common terminology and definitions of eligilibity clients).

15 The program offers **training as an incentive** for collaborators. All collaborators receive training in family literacy philosophy and approaches, and collaborating staff train together when possible to build "buy in" to Even Start approaches.

16 Ownership in the **relationship with collaborators** is built at all levels. Staff are well informed about the roles and missions of the collaborators. Staff express an attitude of respect for collaborators and their contributions, and are willing to work together to solve problems that arise.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

17 Some Even Start staff have **"boundary-crossing" roles** with collaborating agencies; e.g., adult education instructors work with early childhood staff to plan home-based parent-child literacy activities.

18 Collaborators have a role in identifying outcomes for local evaluation and an interest in **evaluation results**. Collaborating agencies cooperate with data collection, as needed. Even Start local evaluation addresses successes of and improvements in collaborations.

19 **Families have a role** in identifying possible collaborators. Families are encouraged to select resources that are most appropriate for them.

20 The partners assume joint responsibility for developing and implementing a **continuous improvement plan** for program design and services.

21 The partners assume joint responsibility for developing a long-range **continuation plan** for the program by the second year of the grant cycle to ensure continued funding after the grant ends.

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1 The leadership has an articulated **vision of family literacy** for the program and the role of the community in supporting this vision.

2 Program administrators' management styles foster **shared decision-making** and team-building that involve partners, collaborators, staff, and parents.

3 Program administrators implement a **management and accountability system** that allows them to measure program effectiveness and outcomes.

4 Program administrators have, at a minimum, **Bachelor's degrees and professional experience** in one or more of the Even Start component areas of family literacy (for example, early childhood education, adult education). Administrators have or obtain training in comprehensive family literacy services and program management.

5 Program administrators actively **recruit staff** with strong credentials and experience in family literacy and related fields. High priority is placed on candidates who have similar cultural and language backgrounds to the majority of program participants. Instructional staff who are paid by Even Start as of the year 2000 have or are working toward obtaining certification or a college degree in fields related to early childhood, elementary or secondary, or adult education by 2004. Instructional staff hired after December 22, 2000 must have such a degree and/or certification.

6 **Paraprofessionals** who provide support for academic instruction **are supervised by professional staff** and have, at a minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent. Staff with Master's degrees in early childhood education are available to instructional staff for consultation.

7 The program has a written **staffing plan** that includes job descriptions and expectations for each position, including required credentials or licenses, and desired personal qualities. The plan includes a long-range view of staffing patterns to enhance consistency, continuity and quality of services.

8 There is a staff **supervision and support plan** that is understood by all staff members. The plan includes policies for addressing staff concerns, and a process for peri-

odic reviews of job performance, salary and professional development plans.

9 The program complies with state and local **licensure requirements** for staffing and physical program settings.

10 The program has an **orientation** for all new staff that fully describes family literacy and the goals, philosophy and operations of the program. The orientation includes a summary of participating families' strengths and needs.

11 Program administrators are attentive to the **working conditions** of staff, recognizing the value of retaining qualified staff. Recognition of staff's expertise and appreciation for staff can be shown through: (1) salary scales and equity (based on credentials and experience, comparable to other professionals, and competitive with local salaries for similar work), (2) benefits, (3) professional development opportunities, and (4) reasonable caseloads.

12 The leadership recognizes that maintaining high quality staff and services requires **sufficient monetary resources**. Program administrators establish and maintain an appropriate size caseload based on available resources.

13 Program administrators **manage budget** resources on behalf of the partnership, including preparing an annual realistic budget, approving expenditures (and ensuring records are kept for both cash and matching resources expenditures), monitoring the budget status monthly, and filing necessary reports for continued federal funding.

14 Partners and administrators **explore** ways to combine, expand and allocate **resources** to improve the quality of the collaboration.

15 Program administrators establish and maintain a system of **internal communication** to ensure that staff, including staff of collaborating agencies, and families are aware of program events, pertinent family literacy news, and support services. A variety of communication strategies is used, including regular meetings of staff and collaborators, and postings of materials in accessible locations.

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16 Program administrators establish and maintain a system of **external communication** designed to give the program **visibility in the community** and to build support for the program. Examples of external communication strategies include distributing a newsletter, participating in community events, and public service announcements.

17 Program administrators take responsibility for **connecting the program** to the wider field of family literacy. For example, they participate in state and national meetings and conferences related to family literacy and the fields represented by Even Start, and take advantage of relevant information and publications available from national organizations.

18 The leadership seeks **feedback from families and staff** both formally and informally. Program administrators provide opportunities for the leadership to have direct contact with families and staff, observe program activities, review progress data, and participate in the annual program evaluation.

19 The partnership ensures that the program has a data collection plan that complies with **state and federal reporting** requirements, and takes responsibility for the completeness and accuracy of information in reports.

20 Partners and administrators work with an independent **local evaluator** to design and conduct an **annual program evaluation**. The evaluation tools and process are designed to allow for ongoing assessment of progress and comparisons of progress over time. Staff and collaborators participate in shaping the questions addressed in the evaluation, which should include a means of evaluating the quality of collaborators' services. The annual evaluation, at a minimum, summarizes participant progress on desired outcomes and addresses implementation and integration of program components, with recommendations for improvement.

21 Program administrators periodically engage staff and collaborators in reflection on the **effectiveness of the program model** based upon data from the project's local evaluation, and development of new strategies to achieve the desired outcomes for participants. There is special attention to the quality and intensity of literacy instruction.

22 The leadership has developed a realistic **plan to sustain services** after the grant ends. The plan is developed with the governing or advisory board and collaborators, and includes expanding connections and support in the community.

INTEGRATION OF INSTRUCTION WITHIN PROGRAM COMPONENTS

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1 All program components employ a **holistic approach to serving families**; that is, activities and instructional plans are based on needs, goals and interests of families rather than relying on packaged materials without tailoring them to meet different, individualized needs.

2 The program has identified **common messages** that are emphasized across instructional components, for example: the value of education for success in life, high expectations for families, the central role of the parent in a child's development, the importance of applying and transferring skills, the identification of individual strengths, and the value of experiential learning. Staff can articulate these common messages to each other, to families, and to the community.

3 Staff from all program components know all members of each family, and see integration as an effective **instructional strategy** that is essential to achieving the desired **intensity of services** for families.

4 The program makes **specific connections** across program components, for example:

a. Family events and activities are inclusive of all family members (for example, older children, grandparents).

b. Home-based instruction provides an opportunity to practice what is discussed during parenting education; in other words, it is a time for active learning and application of new information. Parenting education addresses issues that arise during home-based instruction and in families' lives outside the program.

c. Some adult literacy skills are taught in the context of early childhood development, parenting education, and home visit activities.

d. Home instructors meet regularly with center-based early childhood and adult education staff to plan activities for families.

5 Program leadership and collaborators foster and support integration of components by providing adequate, paid planning time and **joint staff development**. Cross-component **staff teams meet regularly** to discuss and design integrated instructional plans.

INTEGRATION OF INSTRUCTION WITHIN PROGRAM COMPONENTS

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6 The program's management structure is designed to facilitate integration of components. An **interdisciplinary approach** is used to plan the curriculum for each component, including making connections among themes, content, and instructional and learner strategies.

7 The program continues to work on integration of services with local schools when children are enrolled in **elementary school.**

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1 Recruitment targets families who are **most in need of literacy services** as determined by **low income and low level of literacy**, and other need-based indicators. These are also families who do not have access to and cannot afford services. For English language learners, eligibility should also be determined by their literacy needs based on limited English proficiency.

2 The **key message** to target populations is that Even Start is a family-centered, long-term program that focuses on literacy. Recruitment messages also highlight what the program can do for the **whole family,** and emphasize that program curricula and activities are based on family members' goals and needs.

3 The program uses **multiple methods and sources** for recruitment, including written materials, public service announcements, and personal contacts made through a variety of strategies (e.g., speaking at community meetings, visiting schools, operating booths or tables at public events).

4 Written materials are composed in the **languages and literacy levels** of the populations that the program serves and is targeting. Visual design includes graphics, large print and color to convey key messages. Materials are distributed and posted in **high visibility and high traffic** locations frequented by the target populations (e.g., laundromats, and grocery, convenience and department stores).

5 Current and past **program participants** have an important and planned role in recruiting parents, especially for making personal contacts.

6 Recruitment strategies and messages reflect the **cultural diversity** of the community and the target families. Recruitment methods take cultural values and practices into account (e.g., how and who in the family is contacted, roles of different family members).

7 Recruitment is **proactive,** especially in areas of high poverty. Repeated and varied types of contact are made to encourage participation, if necessary. Programs recognize the preparation time it may take to recruit some families, and the importance of using well-known community contacts and leaders to talk with families.

RECRUITMENT

8 The program provides **clear messages about expecta-tions** for participation so parents have ample knowledge to help them make the commitment to enroll. Anticipated barriers to the family's full participation in the program are addressed during the recruitment process (e.g., trans-portation, child care). Solutions to participation barriers are sought before the family begins participation.

9 The program has written policies for its **selection criteria and process,** including how criteria are weighted and ranked, which are available to all staff, parents, and collaborators. In addition to level of adult literacy, family income, and employment status, criteria may include information concerning family history, stresses and health, and other pressing family needs, which may come from referring agencies.

10 The **pre-enrollment process** is made as easy and comfortable as possible for families (e.g., information is gathered in the home).

11 The program conducts an **orientation** for pre-enrolled families to: describe all program components and services, emphasize expectation of full and extended participation by family members, and elicit feedback and answer participants' questions. The program has a policy concerning attendance/absences and continuing eligibility, which is also covered during orientation.

12 Programs that have **waiting lists** of families stay in contact with them and have an auxiliary plan to provide partial services to family members (e.g., home-based instruction). If the waiting period is lengthy, families are enrolled in programs with partner or collaborating agencies so that they receive some services while waiting.

13 **Recruitment is everyone's job.** All program staff and collaborators know the eligibility criteria and which popu-lations are targeted for the program, and receive some guidance or training in how to recruit effectively. The program has reciprocal relationships with collaborators and other agencies for recruitment and referral.

14 **Recruitment is ongoing.** The program recognizes that different levels of intensity for recruitment are required at different stages in program development. The program monitors changes in community demographics, unem-ployment rate and other factors, and reviews recruitment strategies regularly.

RETENTION

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1 Enrolled families begin participation with a **period of preparation.** This is, typically, a one to three month intake program with planned activities that covers the following: program services, attendance and continuing eligibility policies, family needs assessment, literacy skills assessment, and goal setting. Staff and families identify: positive reasons for participation, barriers to participation and solutions to barriers, expectations of each other, and outcomes of participation. It is essential that **families understand the level of commitment** necessary to gain benefits from the program. Programs may ask parents to sign "commitment contracts" and to renew those contracts annually. The period of preparation may also result in a family being referred to more appropriate programs or services.

2 The program has **written policies** concerning **enrollment, attendance and continuing eligibility** that are designed to enhance participation, and include strategies to deal with family crises and barriers that affect participation. The program also recognizes that "enrollment" may be defined differently in other programs providing collaborating services (for example, Head Start, adult education).

3 All families participate in **all core components** (adult, early childhood and parenting education, and parent-child interactive literacy activities) and in home-based literacy instruction. The program directly addresses problems with participants who are frequently absent and/or reluctant to participate in certain activities.

4 The program has written **exit policies** that cover a variety of circumstances, for example: attainment of goals or graduation from the program, leave of absence (for example, for a family crisis or health condition), chronic absenteeism, and unacceptable or disruptive behavior.

5 The program provides and families participate in **continuous services**, including some instructional services during the summer months, although the format of services may change (for example, home-based instruction may increase if center-based services are not operating for a period of time).

6   Most families stay in the program long enough to **meet significant goals** they have set. Staff work with families to set attainable, meaningful goals for children and adults. Appropriate benchmarks of goal attainment and improvement in literacy, parenting and self-sufficiency are identified. **Parents** participate in **identifying incentives** and recognition for their persistence and goal attainment, and successes are celebrated.

7   The program demonstrates **respect for families** by building on their strengths and interests, recognizing family and cultural traditions and values, and addressing families' critical needs. Program **staff** or adjunct staff reflect the ethnic **diversity** and language backgrounds of the participating families.

8   Improving the **self-esteem of participants** is recognized as essential to motivation and persistence and is supported in the program, especially through giving parents leadership roles and responsibility for planning some program and peer activities.

9   Staff address some of parents' **needs and interests** by making referrals to appropriate agencies and providing outside resources.

10   The program structure, schedule and curricula **encourage individualization** of services for families. For example, staff meet regularly to discuss each family's progress and needs and to adjust services as necessary. The program matches the level of service intensity to the degree of family need.

11   The delivery of program services is **flexible and convenient** for families. Delivery strategies are adapted to meet changing family needs on an on-going basis. The program schedules activities during evenings and weekends to accommodate working parents, and there is some redundancy or repetition built into the schedule of offerings to enhance access.

12   The program collaborates with local social service agencies to ensure that Even Start participation is regarded as an **eligible work and/or education activity** under welfare reform, to the extent possible within state law.

13 The program sponsors activities for both parents and the whole family that encourage social interaction and the formation of relationships among participants, recognizing the importance of **peer support**.

14 The program frequently showcases success of current and past program participants and invites back **successful graduates** to motivate or mentor participants.

15 The program demonstrates **high expectations** for the **self-sufficiency** of families by giving parents responsibilities within the program or agency, arranging job or volunteer opportunities at local businesses, schools and community agencies, and using program graduates and other appropriate adults as mentors for participants.

16 The program **maintains contact with families** during occasional or planned absences. If a participant is unexpectedly absent, staff follow up to find out what happened. If a family drops out temporarily for personal reasons, the program periodically contacts the family. Home-based literacy instruction is increased and used to maintain continuity during times when parents are not able to attend center-based programming.

17 **Services continue** to be available to other eligible family members when a child or parent completes the program, or when a family member is temporarily absent from the program. A child or parent who completes the program continues to participate in appropriate activities, such as parenting education, until all family members are no longer eligible. If a whole family is on a temporary leave of absence from the program, there is a plan for transition back into the program when the family is ready to return.

18 The program conducts **ongoing assessment** of its services (for example, using local evaluation results) to determine patterns of retention that will inform changes in service delivery to ensure that participant needs are being addressed.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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1 **Staff** share certain **characteristics**: they are flexible team players who see themselves as lifelong learners and advocates for the cause of family literacy. They are capable and desirous of working with the most-in-need families served by Even Start.

2 Staff development is explicitly **connected** to the **goals of Even Start**. The program provides training to all staff in the Even Start model and family literacy philosophies.

3 Staff development is **systematic and ongoing**. There is a written plan that includes a budget and benchmarks for staff participation and enhanced skills (for example, number of credit hours or workshops offered, minimum number of hours of continuing education required, attendance, percentage who receive certifications or degrees). The plan also includes professional development goals for individual staff members and the program as a whole.

4 Staff development includes approaches grounded in **research**, including scientifically-based reading research, and the **application of practices** in real situations. Training activities build on the knowledge and skills of participating staff.

5 Staff **identify training needs** and are involved in planning training. Training needs are also suggested by information gathered from collaborating agencies, parents, evaluation results, community needs assessments and legislative changes.

6 The program itself is a **learning environment.** There is a continuous sharing of knowledge and skills among staff, and there are opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of the Even Start program based on local evaluation results and in the greater context of community needs. Administrators and staff encourage a **variety of learning approaches**, including self-directed and inquiry-based learning, mentoring, action research, and peer modeling and coaching.

7 **Training for early childhood** staff includes principles of child development and curricular guidance in all domains, with special emphasis on language development and early reading. **Training for adult education** staff includes adult learning principles and teaching methods that address basic literacy skills, learning disabilities and situated learning (in other words, learning in context).

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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Training for parenting education staff includes principles of child development, interactive literacy development, cultural diversity, and working with schools and community resources.

8 Most staff development topics concern **improving instruction** or **enhancing relationships** with families. To enhance relationships with families, some staff activities address cultural issues and communication skills, especially related to different beliefs, perceptions and attitudes among staff and participants, and include discussions or workshops with parents. Staff development includes attention to a **strengths-based approach** to family development, focusing on identifying and building from what a family does well.

9 Staff development addresses ways to **integrate instruction across components**, and includes **cross-training** in the disciplines involved in Even Start programs. Training also addresses team-building for staff, and cultural awareness and family dynamics concerning participants.

10 Some staff development activities are designed to **motivate staff** by recognizing their contributions personally and professionally, and to promote positive attitudes and teamwork.

11 Trainers have appropriate **knowledge and experience** in the content areas for which they are providing instruction. Content is current and based on sound research and practice, including available scientifically-based reading research.

12 Staff development includes participants from **collaborating agencies**, including public school staff, and training takes place at multiple sites.

13 The program provides **incentives** for participating in staff development, including paid time, transportation as required, and advancement potential. Scheduling permits all staff, including part-time staff, to participate in staff development activities.

14 **Evaluations** of staff development activities address benefits and applications to practice, not simply satisfaction level.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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1 Early childhood **instructors and paraprofessionals are well-qualified**. They are trained in: child development; child observation and assessment; early literacy and language acquisition (including second language acquisition); curricula, environments and materials for young children; parent involvement; cultural diversity and special needs; and working with other staff. Instructional staff and teaching assistants who are paid by Even Start have or are working toward obtaining appropriate state **certification** for early childhood or a **college degree** in fields related to early childhood or elementary education. Paraprofessionals who provide support for academic instruction are supervised by professional staff and have, at a minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent.

2 Early childhood centers have received appropriate **licensing** from the state.

3 Children participate in **sufficient hours** of appropriate early childhood education to produce learning outcomes, approximately 60 hours per month for 3 to 5 year olds. This includes educational and child development activities, such as instructional home visits and guided interaction between parents and children.

4 The physical **environment** is safe, clean, well-lighted, comfortable, and age-appropriate in terms of furniture, equipment, materials, and access to bathrooms and clean-up facilities. Space is arranged so that children can work individually, in small groups, and as a whole group.

5 The **adult-child ratio** allows for frequent interaction between children and adults. Adult-child ratios are consistent with state licensing standards, and allow each child to be known well by at least one adult. Children have sustained relationships with primary teachers/caregivers. The average tenure for staff is longer than one year.

6 At least some staff speak the **home language** of most children.

7 The early childhood program has the explicit goal of **supporting all domains** of development for all children.

8 The program's **curriculum** is grounded in solid research, and staff plan children's activities using the theoretical framework upon which the curriculum is based. The early childhood program has identified foundational concepts

and specific skills that all children should learn. The curriculum allows children to work at different levels on different activities, is designed to achieve long-range goals for children, and relates to local and state school standards.

9 Staff encourage direct, first-hand, **interactive experiences** for learning. Staff recognize that children develop knowledge and skills through active experiences and social interactions. The real world is the subject of learning activities. Classroom activities are integrated and interdisciplinary, building on children's interests and knowledge.

10 There are many opportunities for **child-initiated** learning. Children's play is respected by staff as legitimate learning time. Children participate in planning their days and are aware of basic schedules and routines.

11 The center or classroom environment is **language-rich.** Staff read to children daily. Books and other reading and writing materials are abundant and accessible. The staff demonstrate many ways to encourage children to talk about their experiences and represent their ideas in stories and pictures. Vocabulary development is part of all learning activities.

12 Staff explicitly teach **phonological awareness** skills and frequently make **connections between speech and print**. Staff use rhyming, poetry, music and word play with sound clusters to build sensitivity to phonemic patterns. Staff teach skills associated with **conventions of print and literacy** (for example, bookhandling and following print on a page).

13 Staff encourage development of **reasoning and problem-solving** by providing challenging learning experiences, and through skillful questioning and suggestions for furthering activities. Staff develop children's understanding of key vocabulary associated with sequencing, comparisons and sorting, spatial relationships, and temporal relationships. Children have opportunities to learn the functions and properties of objects, and classify and group materials.

14 The environment reflects the **homes and lives** of children in terms of culture and language. Children's work is displayed in classrooms.

	VERY DESCRIPTIVE			NOT AT ALL DESCRIPTIVE
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15 Staff use positive **behavior management** for discipline. Adults involve children in the development of clear and consistent rules

16 Staff have frequent opportunities and **time to plan** together and with staff of other Even Start components. At least weekly, staff have an opportunity to discuss their observations of children's development and to seek guidance for instructional approaches.

17 Teachers use a variety of **assessment procedures** that are embedded in instruction, including observation, performance assessment, portfolios and interviews. Teachers regularly **observe** children and record observations for use in planning activities and assessing progress. Records of progress and development are maintained on each child and regularly shared with parents. Children are helped to understand their progress in learning. The program has a process for referring children for screening and additional support.

18 Children are **relaxed and happy** in the early childhood environment.

19 The program matches expected participation to the needs and development of the child, **individualizing** for each child. Staff have identified activities for the development of individual children based on observations. Staff provide opportunities for all children to succeed.

20 **Parents provide input** on children's readiness for various activities and also observations of children's progress. Parents are involved in planning programs for children. Staff help parents understand how home activities can reinforce and extend children's learning.

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1 The program recognizes that **adults play multiple roles** — parent/family member, worker and citizen/community member – and that these roles affect their participation in the program and the goals they set for themselves as adult learners. Therefore, the program values a wide variety of functional skills and academic goals.

2 **Instructional staff** who are paid by Even Start have or are working toward **obtaining certification or a college degree** in fields related to adult education or early childhood, elementary or secondary education. If adult education staff are employed by a collaborating agency, Even Start program administrators are involved in their selection whenever possible.

3 Staff are knowledgeable about the **characteristics of adult learners** (for example, they are self-directed, and desire instruction to be relevant to their lives and have practical applications). Staff are knowledgeable about learners' cultures and languages, including the influence this has on program participation and reactions to new information.

4 Adult learners have **short and long term goals** for their participation in education and training. The goals represent realistic expectations and take into consideration previous education and work experiences. These goals are expressed in a written plan and are measurable or observable. Goals are revisited periodically and revised when necessary, and progress toward goal attainment is assessed. Adults' individual goals shape the program and are directly and explicitly connected to instruction.

5 Adults' initial **literacy skills are assessed using appropriate instruments**. The baseline for measuring improvement in literacy skills is the level of literacy exhibited or documented upon program entry. Staff are aware that testing during intake is not appropriate for some adult learners and may postpone formal assessment until a later date.

6 Intake procedures include some type of **self-evaluation** to elicit personal attitudes, values and perceptions about learning and expectations of the program, since these are important indicators of self-esteem, motivation and persistence.

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7 Program staff work with learners to **remove or reduce** situational and institutional **participation barriers**; for example, lack of child care, transportation and support services, and the schedule and variety of program services offered.

8 **Self-direction** is supported and encouraged. Adult learners are involved in making decisions about all aspects of the learning process, and are given sufficient information about education services and options to make informed decisions.

9 **Academic content is taught within a functional context** appropriate to the lives of adult learners. Content is **integrated** with other program components. The adult education component includes competence in life skills,numeracy, reading and language, and computer skills. Language literacy includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Writing is incorporated into the majority of learning activities, and learners who need explicit writing instruction receive it.

10 Instruction and learning activities explicitly build upon **learners' prior knowledge**. Instruction emphasizes integration of new learning with previous experiences and knowledge, and encourages application and transfer of learning to daily life and new situations. Connections are made to children's instructional programs and to the activities of home-based instruction.

11 A **variety of instructional methods** is used, including a balance of individual and group activities. The instructional mix includes independent study, small group instruction, computer-aided instruction, cooperative learning, and individual tutoring.

12 **Adults in the lowest literacy levels** participate in adult education lessons or classes for at least 100 hours per year. This participation may be a combination of tutoring, on-site classes, off-site classes, home-based and computer-based instruction. Most adults make regular progress on formal and informal literacy indicators (such as grade levels and life skills goals) until they exit the program.

13 **Adults who enter the program at higher literacy levels** who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, obtain a diploma or equivalent within two years. Adults who obtain their high school diploma or equivalent while in the program who are still eligible to participate based on their children's eligibility continue to pursue other goals, including employment, job training or postsecondary education.

14 A combination of **formal and informal assessment** methods is used to identify ongoing needs and to measure progress. Post-testing is done after 50 to 70 hours of basic literacy instruction or at the end of specific courses. Informal assessment is done regularly and frequently. Results are discussed with learners and linked to learners' goals and to instructional plans. Ideally, assessments are carried out in the context of meaningful tasks and are related to performance. Adults understand the purpose and results of assessments, and can explain their own progress.

15 **Materials** are appropriate for the **range of literacy levels**, interests and goals of learners represented in the program. Materials are culturally and linguistically appropriate, and reflect the context and needs of learners' lives. Materials include authentic items, such as newspapers, standard forms, magazines, novels, workplace items, parenting information, and household and financial items (for example, correspondence and bills).

16 The physical and emotional **learning environment** is suitable for and respectful of adults; in other words, there is appropriate furniture and an atmosphere of mutual trust and acceptance. Staff have good **rapport with learners** and value their life experiences and ideas.

17 **Program design** offers maximum **flexibility** for the adult learner in terms of entry options, format, schedule and location. The program actively encourages re-entry if absence from program occurs, and recognizes absences due to unforeseeable problems (for example, job change or loss, family crisis).

18 The program ensures that **adequate adult education services** (approximately 60 hours per month) are provided by the program itself or with collaborating programs. **Instructional services are continuous**, including the summer months, although the format of services may change in different program cycles.

19 The program promotes advancement in learning beyond basic literacy. **Job readiness** and career exploration are part of the curriculum. Staff are knowledgeable about a range of options for participants to continue their learning and/or obtain employment. Staff develop **transition plans** with adult learners to meet their goals, including long-term goals for self-sufficiency.

VERY DESCRIPTIVE				NOT AT ALL DESCRIPTIVE
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20 Staff are knowledgeable about the **educational uses and benefits of technology**. Staff ensure that adult learners have access to and assistance in using computer-based instruction. Computer-based instruction includes educational, commercial and web-based courses in academic subjects, office and training applications, and general interest topics. Access may include computers on-site, computers off-site (in public facilities and collaborating agencies), and distance learning (web-based or via satellite).

21 Staff are knowledgeable about **learning disabilities** and ensure that the needs of adults with learning disabilities are met.

22 **Staff act as facilitators and resources**. They also recognize and promote learners as resources for each other. Staff model and encourage problem-solving behaviors to help adults become more independent and self-sufficient.

23 Staff turnover is low. Learners generally have the same instructor for the program year. If staff changes occur, program ensures **continuity** of academic work and instructional methods.

24 Staff participate in ongoing **staff development**, including training specifically related to adult and family literacy. Adult education staff from collaborating programs are invited and encouraged to attend professional development activities. Staff maintain contact with parenting and early childhood staff and exchange relevant information. Ideally, they meet weekly to plan an integrated curriculum.

	VERY DESCRIPTIVE			NOT AT ALL DESCRIPTIVE
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1 The focus of parenting education is **content that supports children's literacy development** and early educational success. Programs have clear goals and objectives for parenting education that are tied to literacy outcomes.

2 In order to produce substantial improvements in literacy outcomes for children, parents **participate intensively in parenting-related activities** (approximately 20 hours per month), and such activities are integrated with other program components.

3 Parenting education programs provide a **balanced range of information and skill-building opportunities** to: engage parents in language-rich parent-child interactions; provide supports for literacy in the family; support parents in holding appropriate expectations of the child's learning and development; support parents in actively embracing the parenting role; and build the capacity of parents to form and maintain connections to the community and other resources.

4 **Parent-child interactive literacy activities** are an integral part of the program's parenting education plan. The program provides regularly scheduled opportunities for guided parent-child interactions, such as dialogic reading, and using open-ended questions to prompt discussions and enrich verbal exchanges.

5 There are a **variety of ways that parents can participate** in parenting activities (such as individual coaching and mentoring, and group activities), and staff use different approaches for presenting information (such as discussions, readings, and use of media). Parents' level and type of participation is also based on family goals and parents' literacy skills.

6 **Reading by adults and by adults to children every day** is encouraged. There is an explicit intent to increase the amount of literacy activity in the household. The program helps parents to learn about sources of books for children and themselves, including becoming borrowers at public libraries. The program provides specific opportunities for parents to improve their skills in reading to and with their children, including direct instruction and staff modeling on strategies for reading with children.

7 Parenting education includes attention to **family development** and family relationships. The parenting program includes attention to increasing **parents' sense of efficacy** (that is, their belief that they can make a difference in their children's lives).

8 Parenting education builds on the **interests and questions of parents,** and does not rely solely on scripted materials. Parents are actively involved in the design and planning of parenting activities. Ongoing assessments by parents are used to ensure responsiveness of activities to parents' interests and needs.

9 **All staff** view parenting education as part of their job responsibilities and receive training in parenting education as part of their jobs. Training includes information about the development of language and literacy, ways to support and enhance parents' verbal interactions with children, and strategies for explicit modeling, guided self-reflection, and providing feedback to parents.

10 Staff have an empathetic view of parents and the challenges they face. Staff spend time **developing relationships with parents** but are aware of appropriate boundaries. Staff supervision includes support for helping staff set and maintain appropriate boundaries. Staff can distinguish their own supportive behaviors that promote parents' self-sufficiency from behaviors that create dependency.

11 Parenting education includes attention to **beliefs and attitudes about child-rearing** in addition to dealing with positive behavior management. The program presents clear values about the importance of attentive, warm and flexible interactions between parents and children for children's development. The program provides guided opportunities for parents to solve problems within the context of routine family events. The program is sensitive to cultural differences in child rearing beliefs and techniques but recognizes appropriate limits, especially related to child health and safety.

12 Staff recognize that their role is not to be the sole provider of services. The program has collaborators who provide support that families need beyond what Even Start can offer. **Collaborators** might include counseling services, substance abuse treatment and violence prevention programs, housing and food/nutrition services, and legal

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assistance. The program works with collaborators to ensure that families receive messages that are consistent with Even Start messages.

13 Parent development and child development issues and questions are addressed frequently and directly. The program affords opportunities for **one-to-one** exchanges for dealing with parenting issues.

14 Parenting education helps parents maintain **home environments** that are supportive of children through the development of routines, use of literacy in everyday activities, building coping strategies for adapting to changes, and supporting physical and mental health.

15 Activities are designed for easy **transfer of learning** to other situations, including the home learning environment. Expectations for and ideas about transfer of learning and practice are explicit, and teachers follow up with parents individually.

16 Parenting activities have **literacy connections**; in other words, parenting education strengthens literacy experiences that occur within routine family interactions. Parenting is integrated into the teaching of academic skills.

17 The program devises opportunities for the **whole family** to participate in parenting activities. Special efforts are made to invite other adults who are co-parenting children to parenting education activitiies and family events.

18 The materials used in parenting and parent-child activities are **culturally and linguistically relevant**. Parent-child activities are carried out in the dominant language of families.

19 The program designs activities to strengthen **partnerships between parents and schools**. Parents participate in a variety of school and classroom activities, including attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, governance, and home learning activities. Programs work with schools to find opportunities for parents to become involved in school activities outside traditional school hours.

20 The program helps parents **advocate for their children**, including how to obtain high quality services from public and private agencies (for example, child care, educational evaluations).

PARENT & CHILD INTERACTIVE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

1 Activities for parent-child time have a **literacy focus**. Special attention is paid to activities that support children's growth and language development.

2 Parent-child time and activities are designed to help **each parent learn more about his/her own child(ren)** through both observation and play. These interactions help parents to see their children as active contributors to their own development and learning, form reasonable expectations about their children's abilities, and devise their own challenging but achievable play/learning activities. Parents also participate in discussions about these interactions with staff and other parents, reflecting on what they learn about child development and how to apply this knowledge to both center-based and home-based parent-child activities.

3 The program schedules **regular opportunities** for parent-child interactive literacy activities. Formats are varied (for example, home-based instruction, during the child's classroom routines) to accommodate parents' schedules and interests. Parents are involved in planning activities and deciding whether they are child-directed or parent-directed.

4 Parent-child activities are **developmentally appropriate** for the age of the child. Activities are designed to ensure ease of transfer by parents to the home setting.

5 Parent-child activities encourage **verbal interaction** between parents and their children, object manipulation and play, and engaging children in problem-solving and decision-making. Parents and children **read stories together** in an active and participatory manner. Activities are fun and encourage involvement of both child and parent.

6 The program provides opportunities for parents to increase their observation skills and practice them in **multiple contexts.** Parents have opportunities to try out learning activities with each other before doing them with their children.

PARENT & CHILD INTERACTIVE LITERACY ACTIVITIES

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7 Parent-child activities are **culturally sensitive**. Staff take time to learn how parents and their children are comfortable learning together, and work with parents to plan parent-child activities based on this information.

8 Staff provide **training and feedback** for parents on how to initiate parent-child learning activities on their own as part of everyday family routines.

9 Staff follow up with individual parents and provide additional information and support to assist parents in **transferring parent-child activities into the home setting.**

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1   All families receive home visits with an **instructional focus** and educational objectives. The **number and duration of visits** vary by program model and family need. There is a clear rationale for the number of instructional home visits per family that is related to family need and program model.

2   Program staff recognize that some families require a **transition period** before instructional home visits begin. Some parents may be uncomfortable allowing staff in their homes and may prefer to participate in group activities first. Temporary alternate locations, such as libraries, are identified if the family is uncomfortable with the visit occurring in the home. Alternative settings should be familiar to and comfortable for the family and allow for focused interaction.

3   In unique cases when instructional home visits are not possible because of special circumstances (e.g., hostile family members, frequent interruptions, or family is strongly opposed to visits in their home), arrangements are made to **meet at an alternative site.**

4   Instructional home visits are prearranged, planned and **regularly scheduled**. Home instructors and families understand the importance of instructional home visits and make the environment conducive to learning.

5   **Literacy is a primary focus of activities.** The instructional home visit is used as an opportunity for the parent and child to learn and play together, and to see the home as the child's "first classroom." Home instructors support the development of literacy in the home by using materials found in the home for learning activities, bringing books to share, and helping parents to create "predictable" reading and play time for the child.

6   Materials and approaches for the instructional home visit are **tailored for each family.** Home instructors build upon and adapt to the family environment, seeking transfer of home visit activities to daily interactions between parent and child, and helping the family incorporate literacy into the home environment. In center-based programs, the visit is an extension of educational activities introduced in the center-based setting.

Very Descriptive				**Not at all Descriptive**
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7 Instructional home visits are an opportunity to demostrate **how to balance attention** to parent-child relationship building, child development, and parents' needs and interests.

8 During the visit, staff help parents **observe children** and point out developmental interpretations of children's actions. Home instructors model positive interactions and reinforcements.

9 **Parents have an active role** in shaping the visit and in the debriefing of the visit. The home instructor and the parent plan activities for the other adults and children who are likely to be present during the instructional home visit.

10 The program places a high value on staff's **rapport with families** and families' comfort with home instructors. Rapport with families in the program is key for staff selection and supervision. Staff are assigned to the same families over time whenever possible.

11 Staff demonstrate **sensitivity to family** culture and respect family boundaries. Ideally, they speak the first language of the family or involve collaborators who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families.

12 The instructional home visit is **linked to all other program components,** and supports retention of families in all components. School and classroom personnel are included in some visits. Home instructors orient other staff who accompany them on visits.

13 Program staff view visits as an opportunity to **identify** the need for other **help and services**. Home instructors receive training in how to deal with issues that are apparent or may arise in the home setting, such as physical abuse, substance abuse, and safety and health. The program provides home instructors with backup support to link families to other resources, and maintains formal relationships with appropriate agencies to help families with multiple needs.

HOME-BASED INSTRUCTION

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14 Home instructors and other family workers have credentials that are appropriate for their roles and comply with statutory requirements. **Staff development** for home instructors includes team debriefing of their instructional home visit experiences. For example, for twelve hours of direct service, approximately one hour of supervision, coaching and mentoring is provided.

15 Home instructors are able to set **boundaries** for their roles in working with families.

16 The program documents instructional home visit objectives and strategies systematically, and seeks information about the **effectiveness of instructional home visits** in reaching family goals.

17 The program **coordinates** instructional home visit activities **with other service providers** who make home visits to the same families. While Even Start staff may need to do separate visits, staff communicate with other home visitors (for example, from Head Start or Home Start) and coordinate visits when feasible. Home instructors inform other Even Start staff about other services that families are receiving, including which other programs are going into the home.

TRANSITIONS

1 The program recognizes that it can facilitate the **horizontal transitions** (for example, between Even Start and Head Start or day care) and **vertical transitions** (for example, between adult basic literacy and GED classes or vocational training) that adults and children make.

2 The program has **policies and procedures** for transitioning into Even Start from other programs, in and out of levels within components, and out of the program as a whole. Transitions out of Even Start are based on exit criteria established by the program, which consider whether families are truly still in need of Even Start services.

3 Staff and parents prepare a **transition plan for each family**, including timelines for anticipated changes and outcomes, and support needed during transitions. Transition plans address how comprehensive services will continue when service delivery mechanisms or eligibility change. Transition activities include opportunities to gain familiarity with new settings and programs.

4 The program views family members as **lifelong learners** and full members of the community, and looks for opportunities to engage them in activities outside of the Even Start program to broaden their community awareness and involvement.

5 **Staff development** includes becoming familiar with the environments and cultures of different settings for the purpose of helping family members successfully move between and among different environments. Training addresses how to design activities for families to help them deal with the environments they will enter.

6 Staff of Even Start and collaborating **agencies work together** to ease the transitions families make among agencies.

7 The program prepares for **transitions of children** from preschool to kindergarten or first grade in some specific ways:
   a. Transition plans are a topic within parenting classes and home-based instruction, and staff suggest ways for parents to deal with children's anxieties.
   b. Staff tell parents about their legal rights and responsibilities and encourage parental participation in school in a variety of ways.
   c. Early childhood program staff prepare children to deal with changes through activities such as visitations, role playing, and modeling new routines.

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7 d. Staff establish communication with next teachers to share information about each child's developmental progress and needs.

e. Staff take a **proactive role with school staff** and staff from other early childhood programs to help bridge cultural and language differences, to help them gain an understanding of parents' involvement, and to help them recognize strengths of families who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.

8 The program prepares for **transitions of adults** in some specific ways:

a. During class and topical workshops, time is spent on problem-based learning related to handling real-life situations (for example, rehearsing job interviews), discussing educational and training opportunities, and accessing information and support services. These activities are designed to increase participants' belief in their ability to navigate and be successful in making transitions.

b. Adults who receive high school diplomas or their equivalent seek additional education or training, or obtain employment. Staff stress the need for adults to continue their education and to enhance their skills related to career advancement and long-term personal success and achievement.

c. The program maintains connections with employers, postsecondary institutions and social service or other agencies to facilitate next steps for adults.

d. Adults develop personal action plans that include timelines and resources needed to attain goals.

9 **Children who enter school are successful.** School staff see parents as supportive of children's learning and development. When children enter school, participating families continue in Even Start.

10 **The program adjusts** to personal family transitions (for example, divorce, birth, relocation) that occur while families are enrolled in Even Start, and adjusts program services to meet the needs of families during these events.

11 **Staff maintain** an appropriate level of **contact** with family members after they exit the program to support their transitions (for example, parents who no longer need direct services may join a program-sponsored parent support group).